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the
Unfinished Task
1999
Loving the Lost

Lottie Moon
Christmas Offering for
International Missions

NATIONAL GOAL:
\$125 million

Mixon named new stewardship director

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Jerry W. Mixon, pastor of Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale, and current president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), will become the state's new Stewardship Director at the beginning of the new year, following his unanimous election to the post during the December 6 meeting of the MBCB executive committee.



Mixon

Mixon, 59, will replace David Michel, who moved to the post of MBCB Associate Executive Director for Missions Extension on August 17. Michel, who will supervise Mixon in his new role, served as Stewardship Director for more than 15 years.

Mixon is a graduate of Petal High School ('58) in Petal, William Carey College (B.A. '66) in Hattiesburg, and New Orleans Seminary (Th.M. '71) in New Orleans. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from William Carey College in 1975.

He was licensed to the Gospel ministry at Petal Harvey Church, Petal, in 1960, and ordained at the same church in 1964.

Mixon was called to Rocky Creek Church in 1994 while serving at First Church, Hot Springs, Ark., where he pastored for four

years. Churches he previously pastored include First Church, Winona and Goss Church, Columbia. He was also a vocational evangelist for four years.

Upon Mixon's resignation from the convention board, MBCB vice-president Gary Richardson, pastor of First Church, West Point, will become board president.

The executive committee also approved a revision in the Stewardship Department's assignments to include, along with church stewardship development:

- ♦ capital fund raising to assist Mississippi churches, associations, and other convention entities, on a cost-share basis in agreement with the recipient.

- ♦ missions development funding to undergird and endow the work of MBCB as it expands its base of mission support and participation in the new century.

The executive committee unanimously re-elected Frank Harmon, pastor of First Church, Newton, as chairman. Johnny Walker, pastor of First Church, Winona, was unanimously elected as vice-chair. Sue Dockery, member of Broadmoor Church, Jackson, was also unanimously re-elected as secretary.

The executive committee also heard a report from Jim Futral, MBCB executive director-treasurer, that five MBCB departments will shift divisions to better reflect present and future responsibilities.

The Men's Ministry (formerly Brotherhood) and Woman's Missionary Union departments

will be placed under the Missions Extension division.

The Church-Minister Relations department will be placed under the Church Ministries division.

The Baptist Record and Broadcast Services will be placed under the Business Services division.

- ♦ redirected to the Mississippi/Ukraine Partnership Missions Project \$200,000 originally escrowed for use in the "World A" area of mission work.

In the meeting of the full convention board that followed the executive committee meeting, the board heard executive committee chairman Harmon's



LEADERS FOR YEAR 2000 — Officers of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's executive committee for the coming year are (from left) Johnny Walker, pastor of First Church, Winona, vice-chair; Frank Harmon, pastor of First Church, Newton, chairman; and Sue Dockery, member of Broadmoor Church, Jackson, secretary. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

In other business, the executive committee:

- ♦ approved a \$65,000 allocation from interest income for stateside operations of the MBCB Partnership Missions Office. The new allocation will supplement the \$125,000 in interest income granted to the department for the past three budget years.

report along with a proposal from MBCB Executive Director-Treasurer Futral that the board schedule a future meeting in southwest Mississippi, where many of the state's earliest Baptist works are located.

The board unanimously approved the proposal and directed Futral to begin planning the meeting.

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

Md. church starts mission

4

Nelson attacks hunger

5

Tommy Lane dies

6

State conventions meet

8-9

Miss. CP continues rise

Mississippi Baptists gave over \$2.5 million in November through the Cooperative Program (CP), according to Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, which disburses the funds.

November gifts of \$2,553,073, added to previous gifts, brought total \$25,586,770 so far this year.

This amount is \$1,450,780, or 6.01%, more than the same period in the first 11 months of 1998.

The November 1999 amount is \$425,996 more than that given in November 1998. The total gifts for the year are \$24,390,566 by the pro rata budget of \$24,390,566 by the pro rata budget.

The pro rata budget is \$26,607,898, a 10% increase over the \$24,390,566 of 1998. The increase is due to the increase in the number of churches.

After the November meeting, the convention board will face the challenge of raising the \$26,607,898 budget. The board will go through a process of raising the budget. The board will go through a process of raising the budget. The board will go through a process of raising the budget.

SBC CP shows increase

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—November receipts and budget year-to-date gifts of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) were up compared to the same period a year ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chairman of the officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

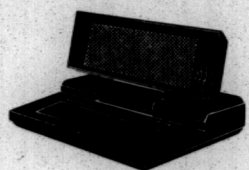
For November 1999, the SBC CP gifts totaled \$13,878,738 compared to \$11,942,959 of 1998, an increase of \$1,935,778. The SBC CP Allocation Budget for 1999-2000, the year-to-date total \$27,909,946 for the first two months of the year, Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

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The SBC CP Allocation Budget for 1999-2000, the year-to-date total \$27,909,946 for the first two months of the year, Oct. 1 through Sept. 30. The required amount was surpassed by \$1,312,656 or 4.94%.

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Holding fast to our Commission

Did you think you would ever see the day when the spreading of the Gospel message was not welcome in America? Well, that day has come — at least in one very significant locale of the country.

The impressive-sounding Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, in a November 29 press release disguised as a letter to Southern Baptist Convention President Paige Patterson, asked that Southern Baptists abandon an evangelistic initiative planned next year in Chicago as part of the North American Mission Board's Strategic Focus Cities program.

The Strategic Focus Cities program is designed to allow Southern Baptist volunteers to evangelize a pair of selected metropolitan areas of the country each year. Chicago and Phoenix were selected for 2000.

Mississippi Baptists have committed to send volunteers to Boston in 2001 as part of the Strategic Focus Cities for that year.

The Council of Religious Leaders, who released their letter to news media the same day it was dated — and several days before Patterson received it — consists of leaders from the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago and 39 other Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish institutions. Southern Baptists are not represented on the Council.

These religious leaders are apparently concerned that Southern Baptists peacefully spreading the Gospel throughout Chicago will somehow lead to the commission of hate crimes. They are careful not to blame Southern Baptists for directly fomenting any violence, but they are asking the denomination to back off plans "to seek converts in Chicago during the coming year."

"We are particularly disturbed that the two groups who appear to be among your primary targets, Muslims and Jews, have during the past six months been victims of faith-based terrorist violence in Chicago," the letter states.

The letter concludes by requesting that Southern Baptists "enter in discussion with us and reconsider your plans regarding this matter."

Sorry, gentlemen. To reconsider our plans to help bring Chicago and Boston — and the world, for that matter — to Christ as soon as possible would be tantamount to reconsidering the responsibility left to us under our Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20).

I don't think that's going to happen.

However, the similarities between the Council and the religious leaders of Jesus' day are striking:

♦ "During the lifetime of Jesus and throughout the history of the early church, religious leaders often opposed the witness of Jesus and his followers, but the common people heard them gladly," Patterson said in replying to the Council's press release/letter.

♦ Charles Lyons, pastor of Chicago's Armitage Baptist Church and one of the people whose ministry was highlighted during the 1999 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, described the essence of the Council's actions as "the politically correct definition of tolerance, which means, 'You be bland, I'll be bland, and we'll all be bland together.'"

♦ Expect to be accused, just like Jesus and his followers, of disrupting the prevailing social order and causing unlawful behavior (or, in the parlance of today, "faith-based terrorist violence").

The similarities to situations in our modern world are equally striking. State-sanctioned Orthodox and other faiths in eastern Europe and other areas are using all political and legal means, as well as

"I WANT TO INVITE YOU TO MY WONDERFUL CHURCH AND TO HEAR MY WONDERFUL PASTOR, AND TO KNOW MY WONDERFUL LORD!"



intimidation, to quash evangelical movements and maintain their positions.

No, Southern Baptists won't be giving up our commitment to evangelize Chicago, any more than we'll be giving up our commitment to evangelize the rest of the world.

"When Southern Baptists come to Chicago, we will come as men and women of peace, committed as always to absolute religious liberty for every individual. We will oppose all human violence as unworthy of the Prince of Peace... (We) will also point people to the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ..." Patterson said.

Amen to that. On to Chicago and then the world!

A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE:



The role of Mary, mother of Jesus

By Carl M. White, Associate Editor

One of the networks recently broadcast a special on Mary, the mother of Jesus. If we are to believe the fanciful views of this production, almost everything Jesus ever did or said came from his mother, Mary.

One truly fantastic scene showed the disciples in the upper-room after the Ascension of Jesus. They didn't know what to do, so Mary gathers them and leads in prayer.

Over the years Protestants have been reluctant to speak of Mary, probably in reaction to how much our Roman Catholic brethren have speculated about her. In some people's view, Mary is a semidivine queen of heaven.

In Pseudo-Matthew, a Latin infancy gospel of eighth century origins, Mary is presented in the Temple at age three walking up the steps of the altar like some kind of queen.

Apollinarius, Bishop of Laodicea, gave Mary the title "Mother of God" in 380 AD. In 1854 Pope Pius IX declared the Immaculate Conception, which is the teaching that Mary was born innocent and never sinned.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII declared that Mary did not die but ascended into heaven like Jesus.

With all due respect to the other Christian groups and the passionate beliefs of others, there is no Biblical support for these ideas.

For certain, Mary is an important figure. She is a key player in the Christmas drama. As C. S. Lewis says, "the (Christmas) story narrows and narrows until at last it comes down to a point, small as the point of a spear — a young Jewish girl at her prayers." The whole Christmas story begins with this child's willingness to be an instrument of God.

The more important question concerning Mary is not whether or not she ever sinned, but whether she became a believer. Is Mary in heaven today, and if so, how did she get there?

Acts 1:12-14 is not thought of as a Christmas text. It is the brief account of what the followers of Jesus did after he ascended into heaven. It is also a listing of who was in the room that day. Notice verse 14: *they all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.* (NASB, emphasis added)

When the Bible gives an accounting of who was in the

Upper Room waiting for the day of Pentecost, 12 people are named: eleven men, and Mary.

It is the Gospel of Luke that tells us Mary's story. Appearing several times in the birth narratives is the phrase, *But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.* (Luke 2:19 NASB) It seems obvious that when the good doctor Luke was doing research to write his Gospel he interviewed Mary. How else would he obtain all the detailed information he gives us?

This would have to be considered the greatest interview of all time. It appears beyond any doubt that Luke found her right where he places her in Acts 1:14 — among the faithful.

As the church was launched into the world in those exciting days described in Acts, the mother of Jesus was one of the participants. After this brief verse, Mary is never mentioned again in Scripture.

I believe Mary, the mother of Jesus, is in heaven today and I believe she got there the same way you and I will. She trusted Jesus, her Son, as her Savior.

Hospital key to reaching Yemenis for Christ

JIBLA, Yemen (BP) — An icon of Southern Baptist mission outreach is transforming itself for a new era of ministry and witness.

Since 1967, the 77-bed Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen has ministered to as many as 40,000 people a year at its 22-acre site near the city of Ibb.

Founded by Southern Baptists James and June Young of Ruston, La., the hospital has given hundreds of Southern Baptists and other internationals the opportunity to help Yemenis experience God's love firsthand.

Now a dramatic step into a new level of ministry is being planned, said Gerry Volkart, an associate director of International Mission Board work in North Africa and the Middle East.

"The Youngs set a sterling example for all of us when they went to a place where people were not receiving medical help or a clear witness and established a hospital that could share God's love with people in both deed and word," Volkart said. "Now we want to follow that same pattern and transform the work so it multiplies the love of Christ to the peoples of Yemen."

A country of more than 16 million people set on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is a ruggedly mountainous country bedeviled with conflicts between the government and tribal groups demanding schools, electricity, and other services in poor tribal areas.

Tribesmen frequently resort to kidnapping foreigners to press their demands. With one of the world's highest birth rates, the country's population has exploded in recent years, but endemic poverty and the rugged terrain prevent access to health care — as well as the message of the love of Christ — for most Yemenis.

Now God is stirring the hearts of missions strategists to



AMONG THE PEOPLE — Roger Lewis talks with Yemeni villagers about how parasites live in water. Such public health efforts exemplify the kind of projects International Mission Board strategists hope will take the good news of God's love to Yemenis in the country's remote mountainous regions. Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen is preparing to take a dramatic step into a new level of ministry that will enable it to reach beyond its 22-acre compound in Ibb to villages with little access to health care services. (BP photo by Sandy King)

re-evaluate medical ministry in Yemen, Volkart said.

A team recently conducted a survey of Yemeni towns and villages to assess what townspeople see as their greatest medical needs.

They identified an urgent need for health care that can go to the multitudes of people for whom the trip to a hospital is very difficult.

Regional leadership is consulting with individuals and groups in the United States and other countries to interpret data from the survey, Volkart said.

A task force will study the data — as well as the findings of other studies conducted in the past two years — and make recommendations about the future of health care ministries in Yemen.

"Southern Baptist leadership

wants to avoid duplicating services provided by other medical facilities, sharpen the focus on multiplying the gospel and be the best stewards of the resources Southern Baptists give them," Volkart said.

"Any decision about the future of medical ministries in Yemen will be based on the region's vision for facilitating a church-planting movement among all the people groups of Northern Africa and the Middle East," he said.

Any transition would follow the pattern of the board's "New Directions" strategy, which calls for marshaling the resources necessary to take the message of the love of God to people who have little or no access to it.

"While a decision about the future of the hospital itself has not been finalized," she said, "it seems likely that reaching Yemeni people in remote areas could require decentralizing the medical ministries."

"This is a transition time," she said. "We're beginning a process

THE BAPTIST Record

and we don't quite know where it will take us or how long it will take to get there.

"Southern Baptists continue to fund the ongoing services of the hospital and they need to continue to pray and provide resources through such avenues as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions," Volkart said.

"The medical work in Yemen is just one of many examples of how Southern Baptists are touching the world through prayers and sacrificial commitment to honor Christ among the nations," he pointed out.

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LifeWay honors 'lighthouse'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — An Oklahoma church credited with being a "lighthouse to the community" was honored Dec. 6 for its contributions to Sunday School ministry by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

First Church, Inola, Okla., received the Washburn-Piland-Taylor Directors Award in the local church category. "The church and its pastor, Mike Butler, have been supportive of everything we do at LifeWay," said Bill Taylor, director of LifeWay's Sunday School group.

"The town of Inola has about 1,200 or 1,500 people and that church has run 631 in Sunday School," Taylor said. "They are a strong church, a FAITH church, a church called by God to be a lighthouse to the community."

Given annually in four categories — Southern Baptist Convention, state, association, and local church work — the awards are named after the last three men who have provided leadership for Sunday School ministry across the Southern Baptist Convention — A.V. Washburn, Harry Piland, and Taylor. This year's awards were presented during the annual gathering of state Sunday School directors and associates in Nashville, Tenn. Piland, who is recovering from recent brain surgery, was present to hand out the awards.

Roy Edgemon, retiring director of LifeWay's discipleship and family group, received the Washburn-Piland-Taylor Directors Award in the Southern Baptist Convention category.

Looking back

10 years ago

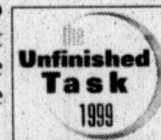
The Mississippi College Choctaws football team beats previously undefeated Jacksonville State 3-0 to win the Division II National Championship in Florence, Ala. The amazing Chocs entered the championship playoffs four weeks ago with the worst record of the 16 teams invited.

20 years ago

Jimmy Allen, immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is elected president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Ft. Worth. Since 1968, Allen has been pastor of 9,500-member First Church of San Antonio.

50 years ago

Jackson area pastors organize the Jackson Baptist Pastor's Conference, which will meet on Wednesday following the fourth Sunday of each month. Harold G. Basden, pastor of Calvary Church, Jackson, is elected president.



the
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1999

Loving the Lost

Matthew 28:19

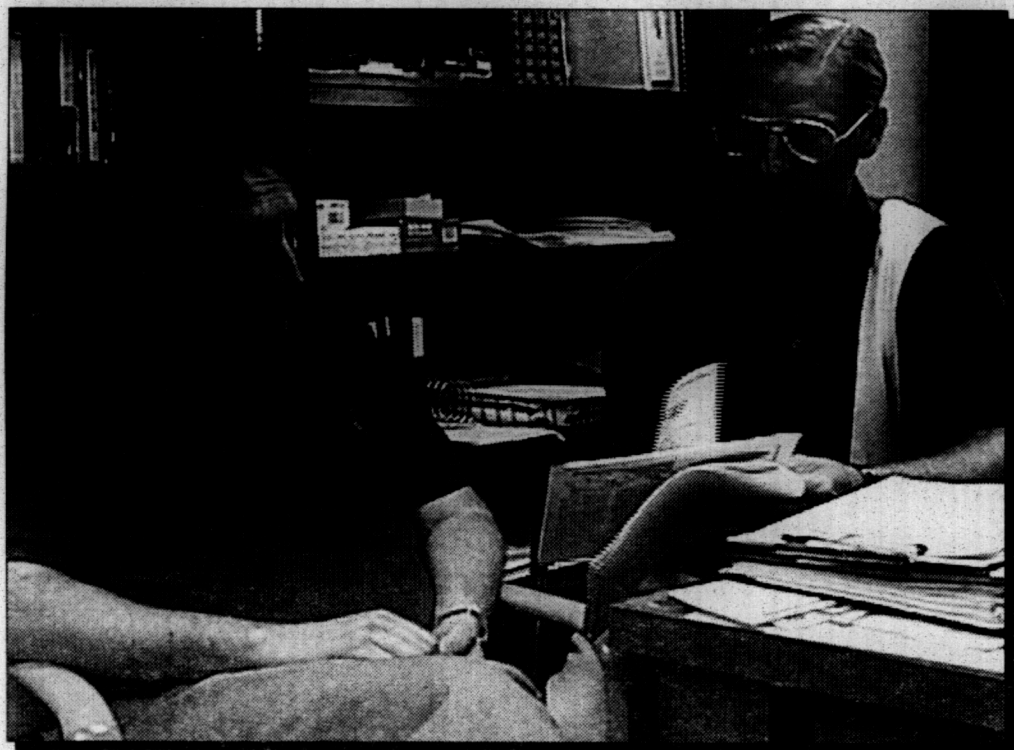
Lottie Moon
Christmas Offering for
International Missions

NATIONAL GOAL:
\$125 million

Md. church starts Russian/Slavic ministries

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

Just north of Baltimore is the city of Cockeysville, where a local Baptist church is reaching out to a very untraditional population in a state sharing a partnership missions project with Mississippi Baptists.



MAKING PLANS — Rumen Borimetcehkov (left), pastor of the Slavic and Russian mission, discusses plans with Cockeysville Church pastor Ray Dale (right). (Photo by Carl M. White)

According to Ray Dale, pastor of Cockeysville Church, within 20 minutes of the church live about 60,000 Russian and Slavic-speaking peoples.

Dale said God had sent a former Russian opera singer to begin a ministry to these people.

Rumen Borimetcehkov is the pastor of the Slavic Baptist Church, a mission of Cockeysville Church. Formerly, he had been a professional opera singer in Europe, singing dramatic baritone.

"For more than 16 years in Europe, I was a professional opera singer, and I had a very good opera career in Europe. I was singing in Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, Russia, Sweden, and also Bulgaria, and for all these years I thought the most important thing in the world was my voice and the money, and to be a very famous opera singer," Borimetcehkov said.

Then in 1990 while in Bulgaria, he and his wife saw the Jesus film at a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association event. They were both saved.

"We went to see this movie, and during the movie we started to cry like little children as we watched Jesus dying because, you see, we didn't know anything about this. It was the turning point in our lives. It changed our lives completely," he said.

A year later Borimetcehkov was offered a full scholarship to Gordon-Cronwell Seminary in Boston, Massachusetts. After graduating from the seminary in 1997, the Borimetcehkovs moved to Cockeysville where he began leading music at Cockeysville Church.

Then an important opportunity came.

"I entered an opera competition in New York City and won. I was offered the opportunity to sing opera professionally again. It was a good opportunity," he said.

However, Borimetcehkov felt the Lord leading in a different direction.

"Very deep in myself I had this feeling it was not God's will," he said.

The Metropolitan Opera gave Borimetcehkov a week to consider their offer.

"I told them a week later that I realized what a great opportunity this was, but I have this thing that God wants me to do," he said.

Borimetcehkov told the church at Cockeysville about his decision. It was about this time that he and the church were made aware of a group of Slavic people in the area.

"In Aug. 1998, I was ordained and started the Slavic mission," he said.

"This church was started with unbeliev-

ers — with atheists. These people don't know anything about Christianity, about the Bible, because in the countries of Eastern Europe, religion was prohibited and the Bible was prohibited, but they are very hungry for God," Borimetcehkov said.

In July 1999 Borimetcehkov was able to start a Russian mission.

"We have already had one saved" at the Russian mission, Borimetcehkov said. "When I was speaking one day at the Russian mission, telling them about Jesus, two women began crying. I realized then I was much more happy with this than with very big success with the Metropolitan Opera," he said.

"I think Mississippi Baptist churches can help us a lot if you can send here, probably during the summer, some groups to do some training with Bible studies. We need materials in Russian — lots of materials — and perhaps Mississippi Baptists can help us here."

Ray Dale agrees. "We're looking for churches to help support Rumen in his work, such as funding materials. We have got to get Russian Bibles and Bulgarian Bibles. We don't have any materials that we can give out to children or adults," Dale said.

In addition, Dale said his church could use help from groups who are interested in helping canvas the area or conduct Back Yard Bible Clubs and Vacation Bible Schools.

"We are a very small church," Dale pointed out, "and we have a very small budget. A large portion of that goes to support the Slavic work and the Russian work. I think we could be creative as we look at endless possibilities with Mississippi Baptists," Dale said.

For more information on the partnership missions project between Mississippi Baptists and Maryland/Delaware Baptists, contact the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Partnership Missions Department at P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 292-3398, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. E-mail: pharrell@mbcb.org.

Va. woman has title of 'oldest adopted annuitant'

FARMVILLE, Va. (BP) — The year was 1894. Grover Cleveland was two years into his second term as 24th president of the United States and was trying to settle the Pullman Strike. The first clutch-driven automobile was invented. On

Oct. 18, Kate Soyars was born near Farmville, Va.

In 1998, Farmville observed its bicentennial year and Soyars was honored as the county's oldest living citizen. Just recently, the Southern Baptist Convention's Annuity Board recognized her as its oldest, living "adopted annuitant."

Kate remembered what it was like for a minister's family in the early part of the century. "The churches would give us poundings," she said. "We'd get bags of vegetables, fruits, canned goods, and other items that would last us quite a while. We never went hungry."

Although they served 10 churches over 40 years, very few of their congregations provided a contribution toward retirement. Those that contributed only offered a small amount. Family members helped to make some contributions in the latter years of their ministry. When pastor Soyars died in 1974, his widow was left with a monthly survivor's benefit of \$56.79 from the Annuity Board.

The Annuity Board's Adopt An Annuitant ministry has been a tremendous help to her. This program now provides a

\$75 monthly supplement to aged ministers and their widows living on inadequate retirement incomes. Currently, nearly 2,700 individuals or couples receive assistance. Funding for the program is provided by individuals, groups, and churches who make direct gifts to the Annuity Board in support of the \$2.5 million annual cost.

Shortly after the program was launched in the early 1980s, Soyars was one of its early recipients. For the past 15 years, she has been getting an extra supplement to her annuity benefit each month.

"She would not have been able to make it without the Annuity Board," Watkins said. "The basic benefit plus the extra amount from the Adopt An Annuitant fund have meant the difference between merely existing in poverty and a reasonable quality of life."

Soyars lives in a Farmville retirement home, but at age 105 she still enjoys knitting, crocheting, and spending time with her family.

When asked about living a long life, her advice is simple: "Just behave yourself and go to church."

Mississippi/Honduras Partnership opportunities available for 2000

DATE	PURPOSE	CONTACT
Jan. 15-22	Construction	Reggie Quimby (800) 264-1225
Jan. 22-29	Construction	Buddy Day (318) 448-3402
Jan. 29-Feb. 5	Construction	Buddy Day (318) 448-3402
Feb. 12-19	Construction	Tommy Puckett (800) 264-1225
Feb. 19-26	Construction/Evangelism	Larry Wayne Arnold (270) 755-2819
Feb. 26-March 4	Construction	Charles Mathis (864) 487-3783
March 11-18	Construction	Reggie Quimby (800) 264-1225
March 18-25	Construction	Buddy Day (318) 448-3402

Nelson: spreading word on hunger offering

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

His clothes were worn and ill-fitting, and his tennis shoes ragged when he walked into Parkway Church, Clinton, and took a seat close to the front just before the beginning of the Sunday morning worship service. Dirty toboggan in one hand, he clutched an old Bible firmly in the other hand.

His large frame wasn't the only reason he stood out among the crowd gathering for the worship service. Obviously, he didn't "look" like the other folks in the room. He was different — the type of mostly-invisible people one hurriedly passes by every Sunday on the way to church.

A street person, maybe, or an alcoholic who wandered in because he had no other place to go on a chilly fall morning in Mississippi? A convict just out of prison, possessing only the state-issue clothing on his back? A mentally-ill man in search of who knows what?

He was none of the above. He was Steve Nelson, director of hunger concerns for the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, and he was there to cast a spotlight in a unique way on the needs of the impoverished.

His real identity known to only a few people — including pastor Ken Anderson — he sat quietly through the opening of the service and sprang from his seat at the appointed time for the sermon.

"What you see is not always what get. The Bible says we may be entertaining angels," he told the Parkway Church crowd.

Nelson commended the congregation for accepting him into the worship service, even though he dressed and acted differently from the typical Sunday morning visitor. He said when he visits Baptist churches in his street person garb, he usually has a pew all to himself.

"Several of our ushers made me feel welcome. There were some dear sisters who walked over and sat next to me," he observed.

In stressing Southern Baptists' annual hunger offering, Nelson told the congregation that well-meaning people often feel overwhelmed or inadequate for the task of feeding the hungry.

"Ministry to the poor is relegated to the dingiest closet in the church. Seventy to eighty percent of Southern Baptist churches are 'plateaued' (not growing). Why? We get so busy with church work that we forget about the work of the church.

"God cares for the needy," he said.

Nelson advocated that Baptists rediscover the concept of gleanings, as found in Lev. 19:9-10 (NIV): *When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.*

In an interview after his visit to Parkway Church, Nelson said he came up with the idea of appearing outside churches in scrubby clothes to make a point about the needy to be found in every community.

"It takes us out of our comfort zone, and raises our awareness that we can't judge people; we can't 'pigeon-hole' people," he said.

"I want Baptists to know the joy that comes in ministry to the 'least of these.' That is when we are near to God," he said.

Nelson warns that Christians should heed God's concern for the needy. He quotes Pro. 21:13 (NIV), which states: *If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.*

The annual hunger offering in Southern Baptist churches is jointly funded by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Atlanta, International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Va., and ERLC. One hundred percent of the special offering is used for hunger relief, with 80% going to IMB and 20% going to NAMB.

For more information, contact Nelson at ERLC, 901 Commerce Street, #550, Nashville, TN 37203-3696. Telephone: (615) 782-8409, or toll-free (800) 475-9127.



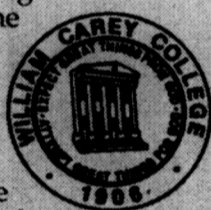
HELP FOR THE HUNGRY — Steve Nelson (left), hunger consultant for the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, discusses the hunger offering collection can program with Michael Black, a member of Parkway Church, Clinton, in the church sanctuary after Nelson preached at the church's two morning services. When Nelson travels to preach, he dresses as an anonymous street person and takes a seat in the sanctuary prior to each service to emphasize the importance of accepting people who are "different," and to encourage participation in the denomination's annual hunger offering. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

WCC accreditation reaffirmed

Larry Kennedy, president of Baptist-affiliated William Carey College (WCC) in Hattiesburg, announced Dec. 10 that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) granted WCC reaffirmation of accreditation for the next 10-year period. This follows a four-day visit in April by a 12-member team selected by SACS to examine the college and make recommendations to the Commission. Faculty credentials, physical facilities, libraries, programs of study, and overall institutional effectiveness based upon the mission of the college were evaluated.

"This report validates the efforts of a faculty and staff who are dedicated to providing academic excellence within a Christian environment. We are committed to helping each student reach his or her highest potential, and this reaffirmation process will help us achieve that goal," Kennedy said.

The SACS announcement follows a recent action of the National League of Nursing which granted the WCC School of Nursing reaffirmation for a 10-year period. WCC offers nursing on campuses in New Orleans, Gulfport, and Hattiesburg.



MISSISSIPPI — A DIFFERENT VIEW

Only a few months ago the latest study showing the distribution of wealth across America revealed again that Mississippi was the poorest state in the nation.

In spite of good economic times and significant growth, there we were on the bottom of the list of 50. For readers across the nation and especially those who have never visited our beautiful state, it would be easy to draw inferences and conclusions that are far from reality. We have made strides economically and, as a whole, the people of the state are financially better off than they have ever been.

With this backdrop of dim and dark information, allow me to paint another picture of Mississippi — especially Mississippi Baptists.

Last year at this time, during the emphasis on giving to worldwide missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Mississippi Baptists gave, per capita, \$16 dollars plus. To understand what that means, it is helpful to understand what other Baptist conventions across the nation gave.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The next largest amount, per capita, given by a convention was just over \$9.00. That has led me at times to say, "Folks in Mississippi may not know how to make money, but they certainly know how to give it!"

Mississippi Baptists, you are an incredible people!

I am reminded of Paul's description of the people of the Macedonian church in 2 Cor. 8, where he said that out of their poverty they gave generously. I am also reminded of the stewardship principle: When it comes to Christian giving it is not so much a matter of the pocketbook, but rather the condition of the heart. Mississippi Baptists give out of a love for the Lord and a passionate love for missions.

It is that time of the year again when we are privileged to embrace the opportunity to

express our obedience and love to the Lord and our sincere care for a world in need of Jesus. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, channeled to the countries and people groups of the world, continues to make an incredible and eternal difference.

On the marble marker erected to remember Charlotte Digges Moon in Crewe, Virginia, these words are written: "Faithful unto Death." For 40 years, Lottie Moon invested her energy, time, money, and her life in being Christ's representative in China. To her, life and service became the definition of "missionary." When she died aboard ship in Kobe, Japan, she weighed only about 50 lbs. There was very little of her left, because she had given it all for the cause of Christ.

While Christmas is certainly a season of giving, it is also a time

of reflection to analyze the priorities of life. We pause and think about the one person who has made the greatest contribution to all of humankind, and yet he was born in a stable to peasant parents. I think about the incredible investments made in our world today and wonder about our own priorities.

I am aware and deeply grateful for many of the discoveries made through our space program, but I recently sat and wondered about us when two of our space probes to Mars were lost. Each of those ventures cost the American people \$165,000,000 — a total of \$330,000,000 launched into space and nothing to show for it!

We as Southern Baptists, joined together, can underwrite a worldwide program of love and proclamation of the Jesus who makes life worth living and eternity secure. The legacy of Lottie Moon and her service to Jesus continues to challenge all of us, and Mississippi Baptists, I thank God that you, too, are willing to focus on God's priorities and give so graciously. May the Lord richly and abundantly bless you during this celebration of Christ's coming, as you continue to give honor to him.

Seminary Ext. to offer new diploma track

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Seminary Extension, for the first time in 20 years, is increasing the number of its diplomas available to students. The new addition is a diploma in childhood education.

The 16 courses in the curriculum are available through classes at Extension Centers or by correspondence through the Independent Study Institute.

For more information, contact Seminary Extension at (615) 242-2453 or 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



GAs of Parkway Church, Tupelo, participated in their annual Christmas Party for Missions. Pictured, (from left, front row) are Katie Mansell, Molly Farrar, Clancy Smith, Meghan Brown, Haley Forsythe, Savannah Wright, Kaci Cook, and Anna Sparks, (back row) Katie Hatfield, Laura Moore, Mandy Houston, Emily Porter, Blair Soper, Lauren Guy, and Brandi Soper. The leaders are Katie Cook, Diane Roberts, Gina Smith, Lori Bishop, and Leigh Barnett.

Tommy Lane, Bellevue music minister, dies

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) — Thomas P. Lane, the first full-time minister of music at Memphis' Bellevue Church, serving 38 years in the post, died Dec. 6 of heart failure at Baptist Memorial Hospital East in Memphis. He was 77 and had been battling stomach cancer for two years.

Lane served under three pastors at Bellevue, all presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, R.G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard, and Adrian Rogers.

A bass baritone who was offered a job with the San Francisco Opera Company after finishing graduate studies at the University of Southern California, Lane instead served at Bellevue from 1948 until his retirement in 1986 at age 65.

In 1990, Lane came out of retirement to serve as minister of music at First Church, Coldwater, Miss. He served there until November when he became seriously ill.



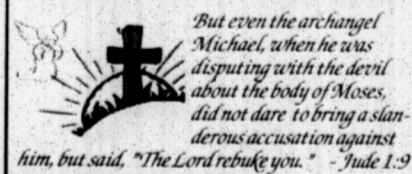
Acteens of Lebanon Association recently held an event at Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, during which they "adopted" MKs, with whom they will correspond and for whom they will pray regularly. Each girl chose a stuffed animal to take home. The animal represented the MKs, and had his/her name on it. Paula Smith, missionary, and Katie Cole, MS Top Teen, were guest speakers. Pictured (from left) are Kelli Parker, Amber Sumrall, Danielle Walton, Cole, and Holly McGregor. Melinda McGregor and Brenda McWilliams are associational Acteen leaders.



Members of the Ole Miss Baptist Student Union (BSU) recently spent the day doing service projects throughout the Oxford community. During "Community Day," 60 students in 11 groups served 30 homes, churches, and agencies doing tasks such as raking, painting, and other indoor/outdoor maintenance projects. Community Day was a local missions ministry of the BSU. Though not intended as a fund raiser, nearly

\$700 was donated. Ole Miss BSU plans to hold another Community Day in the spring.

Michael's Watch



Michael's Watch is a support group whose sole purpose and mission is to offer emotional, mental, and spiritual support for those whose lives have been affected by family members or loved ones involved in the homosexual lifestyle.

Michael's Watch Group meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday each month at First Baptist Church in Louisville, Mississippi from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Additional information may be obtained by calling **First Baptist Church in Louisville, Mississippi** at (662) 773-6246.

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The WMU of Mantee Church, Mantee, had a recognition service to honor its Mission Friends and to present World Ventures Awards to GAs and Missions-Quest Awards to Acteens. Ann Millsaps is WMU director. Ken Hester is pastor.



Acteens of Mantee Church, Mantee



GAs of Mantee Church, Mantee



Mission Friends of Mantee Church, Mantee

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BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS



The Doler family and Michael Donovan were recently honored during a scholarship dinner held at Mississippi College (MC) in Alumni Hall. Scholarship donors and recipients were given the opportunity to meet and share a meal during the annual dinner at MC. Pictured (front row, from the left) are Scott, Andrea, and Jondelyn Doler; (back row) Howell W. Todd, president of MC; Jon Doler, pastor of First Church, Leland; Michael Donovan, Scotti Doler Scholarship recipient; Van Quick, vice president of Alumni Affairs and Student Affairs, emeritus; Danny Rutland, vice president for Institutional Advancement. Persons interested in donating to the Scotti Wilson Doler Scholarship should contact Danny Rutland, vice president for Institutional Advancement at (601) 925-3256.

The William Carey College (WCC) Speech and Debate Team (Forensics) placed first overall at the Louisiana Lagniappe Speech Tournament held at Louisiana State University - Shreveport, Dec. 3-5. In addition to the first place ranking, the WCC team also placed first in the Individual Events Sweepstakes. Chris Smith of Pearl placed first in the Pentathlon and first in Parliamentary Debate with his partner Mandy Trammell. He placed second in duo interpretations, third in informative speaking, and fifth in persuasive speaking. Matthew Smith of McComb, received first place awards in poetry interpretation and in duo interpretation with partner Emily Strickland. He also placed third in Pentathlon and fifth in programmed oral interpretation. Emily Strickland of Panama City, Fla., placed first

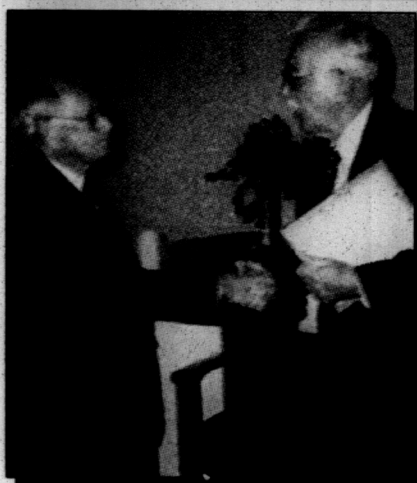
in informative speaking and in duo interpretation with partner Matthew Smith. Strickland was a quarter finalist in parliamentary debate with partner Josh Vandenbrink of Slidell, La. Mandy Mzingo of Poplarville place first in persuasive speaking, third in impromptu speaking and fourth overall as Parliamentary Debate speaker. Ron Durbin of Laurel, received a second place award in dramatic interpretation and a third place overall as Parliamentary Debate speaker. Emanuel Buckley of Hattiesburg, was awarded second place in dramatic interpretation. Samantha Cottrell of Crystal Springs, received a third place award in poetry interpretation and a fifth place award in dramatic interpretation. Darren Van Michael of Hattiesburg is director of WCC Forensics.

Two members of the Mississippi College Speech and Debate Team competed in the Louisiana Lagniappe Speech Tournament held at Louisiana State University - Shreveport, Dec. 3-5. Brett Harvey and Sonya Dickens finished first and second respectively in the Parliamentary Debate Tournament Speaking Awards, earnings spots in the quarterfinals of the tournament. Harvey took first place in both Extemporaneous and Impromptu Speaking and fourth in Dramatic Interpretation. Dickens and Harvey paired to take third in Duo Dramatic Interpretation. In addition, Harvey was awarded the prestigious Norwig award, named after the long-time Director of

Forensics at Louisiana Tech Jim Norwig, and given to the tournament's top performer in both debate and individual events. Over all the team finished sixth in the Individual Events Sweepstakes and fifth in Overall Sweepstakes. Web Drake is director of Forensics at MC.

The William Carey College Theatre will present "The Trial of the Big Bad Wolf" by Joseph Robinette, as its annual play for children. Performances will be Dec. 14 and 15 at 7 p.m., and Dec. 16 and 17 at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the O. L. Quave Theatre on the Hattiesburg campus. The box office is open weekdays from 1-4 p.m. Seats may be reserved by calling 582-6221. All tickets are \$3 each.

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Hudson and McBride

Clarkson Church, Webster County, honored Robert Howard McBride on Nov. 14. McBride served as active deacon from 1962-1999 and is now serving as inactive deacon. Pictured with McBride is John Hudson, interim pastor.

Ken Marble was ordained as deacon during deacon ordi-



Marble and Taylor

nation services at Wade Church, Wade, on Sept. 26. Pictured (from left) are Marble and Mark Taylor, chairman of deacons.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

Christmas House '99 will be held at Flowood Church, Flowood, Dec. 16-18, from 6-8 p.m. For more information or to make reservations, call (601) 992-6464.

Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa, will present its annual outdoor "Living Nativity" on Dec. 19-22. Performances on Sunday-Tuesday are scheduled for 7-9 p.m., and Wednesday from 8-9 p.m. A candlelight service will be held at the church on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Greg Johnston is pastor. For more information, call the church at (228) 745-2938.

Christmas, I Love to Tell the Story will be presented at Enon Church, Grenada, Dec. 19, at 6 p.m. There will also be a Live Nativity in front of the church, Dec. 21-23, from 5-8 p.m. Al Finch is pastor.

The Best Gift of All will be presented at Lollars Grove Church, Eupora, Dec. 19 at 6:30 p.m.

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Trip includes Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Liechtenstein in the heart of Europe.

TOUR #3: Holy Land/ Egypt -- Dec. 26, 2000 - Jan. 6, 2001
Cairo, Memphis, with optional cruise down the Nile to Luxor and Aswan.

BWA to meet in Lebanon in 2001

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)—After meetings with the president and prime minister of Lebanon, Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Denton Lotz announced that Beirut, Lebanon, will be the site of the annual BWA General Council meeting in July 2001.

The BWA's 18th Baptist World Congress, meanwhile, will be Jan. 5-9, 2000, in Melbourne, Australia. Details about the congress can be seen at the BWA Internet site, www.bwanet.org.

Staff changes

Paynes Church, North Central Association, has called **Tommy Tanner** as pastor effective Oct. 10. Tanner, a native of Raleigh, previously served in churches in Smith and Jasper counties.

Good Hope, Purvis, has called **John Watts** of Milton, Fla., as pastor effective in November 1999. A native of Columbia, Watts received his education at New Orleans Seminary. His previous place of service was First Church, Parker, Fla.

Conventions hold annual meetings around country

KENTUCKY
OVINGTON, Ky. (BP) — Kentucky Baptist messengers narrowly defeated a motion Nov. 16 to affirm Southern Baptists' unamended 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement of beliefs.

In other actions, Terry Wilder was elected state convention president by a vote of 687-542 in a race against Paul Badgett. Wilder is pastor of Burlington Church and Badgett is pastor of First Church of Pikeville.

In other business, messengers voted to increase the Cooperative Program budget 4% for the 2000-2001 fiscal year, beginning next Sept. 1, while slightly changing the percentages for Kentucky Baptist and Southern Baptist work. The KBC Cooperative Program budget was increased to \$21 million, a 4% increase compared to the 1999-2000 budget.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COLLEGE PARK, Md. (BP) —

Delegates to the District of Columbia Baptist Convention's 123rd annual meeting affirmed the development of partnerships with selected Moscow Baptist congregations, more than 40 of which are in various stages of formation.

Sergei Zolotarevsky, director of the Moscow Baptist Association, attended this year's D.C. meeting and spoke to the Nov. 15-16 gathering at University Baptist Church, College Park, Md.

The convention's 208 delegates adopted a 2000 budget of \$1,496,798, a 2% over the current year, maintaining a 37% designation primarily for causes of the Southern Baptist Convention and American Baptist Churches, two of the three national bodies with which the 99-church D.C. convention is aligned, along with the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Lynn Bergfalk, pastor of Calvary Church, was elected president for 2000, while Clarence G. Berrens of Fort Washington Church, a local realtor, was elected vice president, both without opposition. LaTricia Jones, a member of Georgetown Church, was re-elected secretary and treasurer.

OHIO
TOLEDO, Ohio (BP) — Messengers to the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio's 46th annual meeting approved a \$673,400 challenge to the convention's 2000 budget, celebrat-

ing the 75th anniversary of the Cooperative Program.

Messengers actually approved a total budget of \$7,320,451, an increase over 1999 of \$153,639, or 2%. The budget anticipates Ohio churches giving \$427,064 in Cooperative Program gifts of which 40% will be sent to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program. The SBC percentage is the same as 1999.

In conjunction with the 75th anniversary of the Cooperative Program, a \$673,400 addition to the budget was added as a challenge portion. All Cooperative

Nov. 4-5 annual meeting increased the Cooperative Program percentage for the SBC.

The four presidents were named to the study group which will look at the name change since the convention area includes northern New Jersey and southwestern Connecticut. The two areas are not now readily identifiable as part of the Baptist Convention of New York, a convention spokesman said.

Messengers approved a \$2,932,157 budget for 2000 which includes an anticipated \$606,766 in Cooperative Program receipts

national and international by 1%, to 26% of an anticipated \$393,000 in giving by the 11,300 members of the Iowa convention's 95 churches and missions.

In a resolution, messengers voted "to accept the challenge given by O. Wyndell Jones [executive director-treasurer] to earnestly pray for revival in Iowa by encouraging our churches to pray without ceasing for a spiritual awakening in each town and county of this state."

The resolution affirmed ongoing support and promotion of the Cooperative Program as a "vital arm of mis-

at 31.5. The HPBC budget has no preferred items that are paid from Cooperative Program funds before the contribution to the Southern Baptist Convention is calculated.

SOUTH CAROLINA
SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP) — South Carolina Baptists took strong stances on three of the state's most controversial and divisive issues — the Confederate flag, the video poker ban and the proposed lottery — during their Nov. 9-10 annual meeting in Spartanburg.

Meeting at North Spartanburg First Church, the 1,200 messengers to the 179th annual meeting of the South Carolina Baptist Convention also elected Hartsville pastor Don Purvis as president, adopted a \$28.85 million budget and approved a three-year missions partnership with Taiwan.

The \$28.85 million convention budget adopted by messengers represents an increase of \$1.1 million, or nearly 4%, over the 1999 budget. Sixty percent of the \$28.35 million in Cooperative Program receipts, or \$17.01 million, will continue to be allocated for state missions and ministries, while 40%, or \$11.34 million, will be forwarded to Southern Baptist Convention causes.

WEST VIRGINIA
PRINCETON, W.Va. (BP) — West Virginia Southern Baptists boosted their Cooperative Program giving and adopted a long-range plan encompassing five key priorities during annual meeting sessions Nov. 5-6 at First Church, Princeton.

An overall budget of \$2,142,204 was approved, an increase of nearly \$110,000 over the current year. In Cooperative Program giving, a goal of \$1,090,284 was adopted for the state's 190 churches and missions, with 36.5% designated for Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries — an increase of .5% of the anticipated giving beyond the current year's allocation. No preferred items or exceptions are deducted from the state CP figures before calculating the SBC portion.

Convention officers were re-elected without opposition: Kenny Stidham, pastor of Good Shepherd Church, Scott Depot, president; Don Yeager, pastor of Fairlawn Church, Parkersburg, first vice president; Richard Carbaugh, pastor of First Church, Grandview, second vice president; and Fred Morgan, a member of Fairlawn Church, Parkersburg, recording secretary.

sionary outreach," and it noted the messengers' desire "to thank the churches, associations and state conventions of Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Missouri which have supported God's work in Iowa through prayers, mission teams and financial aid. Their consistent assistance has been an enormous aid to Southern Baptists across Iowa."

An overall budget of \$1,546,994 was adopted, up from the current year's budget of \$1,436,497.

HAWAII
KAILUA KONA, Hawaii (BP) — Messengers to the 57th annual session of the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention (HPBC) celebrated a new five-year partnership with the California Southern Baptist Convention, with its seven-year partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Convention drawing to a close this year.

The convention adopted a budget of \$2,223,278 for the year 2000, which is slightly less than the current budget, by nearly \$61,000.

The Cooperative Program portion of the budget calls for \$887,989 in gifts from the Hawaii convention's 100-plus churches, \$26,214 less than this year's budget. The percentage forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention will remain

from BCNY churches. Of that amount, \$147,141, or 24.25%, will be sent to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program for missions and ministry causes. The SBC portion is a .25% increase, the first since 1996.

Edward J. Hatcher, pastor of Central Hunterdon Church, Flemington, N.J., was re-elected president. Other officers include: first vice-president, Delmer Olds, layman from Terrill Road Church, Scotch Plains, N.J.; second vice-president, Samuel Wong, pastor of Chinese Promise Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.; and recording secretary, David Shepherd, a professor at the Northeast Branch of Mid-America Seminary in Schenectady, N.Y.

Special guests at the annual meeting included former convention executive directors Jack Lowndes and R. Quinn Pugh. Bob Record, president of the SBC's North American Mission Board, was the featured speaker for the convention's Founder's Banquet.

IOWA
AMES, Iowa (BP) — The year 2000 was designed as one of "Fervent Prayer and Evangelism" by messengers to the Baptist Convention of Iowa's Nov. 5-6 annual meeting.

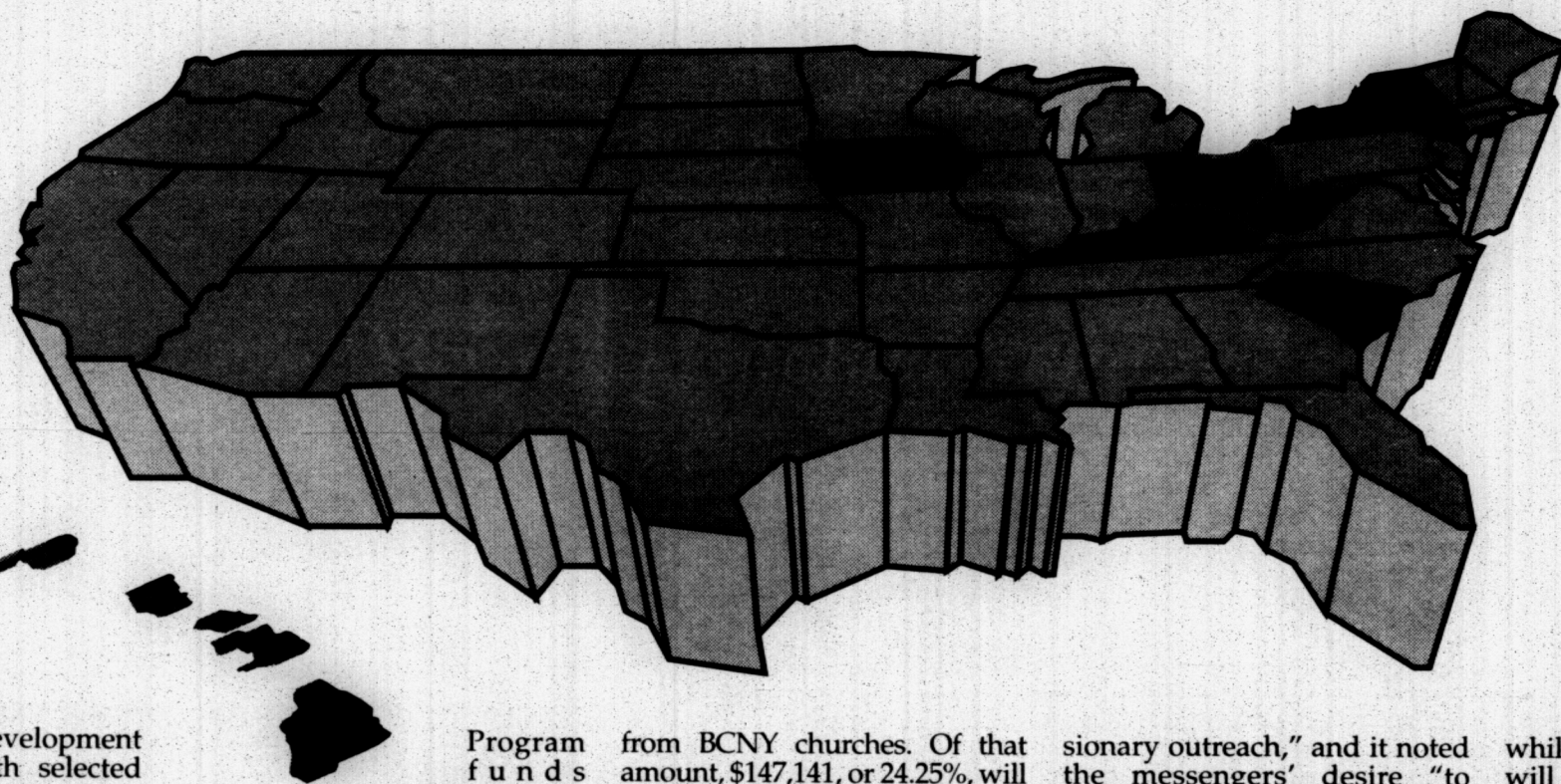
Messengers also voted to increase the percentage of their Cooperative Program receipts designated for Southern Baptist

Program funds received in excess of the convention's operating budget will be distributed according to the 60/40 formula: 60% to Mission Ohio causes and 40% to the SBC.

The challenge amount received by Mission Ohio will be divided equally between Starting Churches and Strengthening Churches programs. Starting and strengthening churches are the twin focus of Ohio Baptists' vision of reaching "One million Southern Baptists in 2020 churches by the end of the year 2020." As of 1998 there were 615 churches in the convention with 146,079 members.

Meeting at the Clarion Westgate Hotel in Toledo, the 362 messengers also elected Will Langford, pastor of Lakota Hills Church in West Chester, as president. David Hill, pastor of Northside Church, Springfield, was elected first vice president. Dan Duffey, pastor of First Church, Sheffield Lake, was elected second vice president. All three are Ohio natives.

NEW YORK
LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (BP) — Four former convention presidents will study a proposal to change the name of the Baptist Convention of New York, and messengers to the convention's



Conventions hold annual meetings around country

ALABAMA
MOBILE, Ala. (BP) — Alabama Baptists passed a record budget, finalized partnerships with Hawaii and Spain and initiated new missions partnerships during the Nov. 16-17 annual meeting.

Down from 1,839 registered messengers at the 1998 meeting, the 1999 state convention — hosted by Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile — registered 1,245 messengers.

During the State Board of Missions report, messengers approved a record Cooperative Program base budget of \$37 million and a challenge budget of \$38 million.

Both budgets are nearly 1 million more than the 1998 budgets approved by messengers.

The 1999 budget amounts will be distributed at 42.3% going to Southern Baptist Convention missions causes and 57.7% going to Alabama Baptist missions causes.

All officers elected in 1998 were re-elected: president, Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Church, Hoover; first vice president, Mike McLemore, pastor of Lakeside Church,

Hoover; second vice president, and John Long, director of missions for Baldwin Association; recording secretary.

NORTH CAROLINA
WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP) — A proposal to share leadership between conservatives and moderates failed to receive a needed two-thirds majority during the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's Nov. 15-16 annual meeting.

Messengers also voted to start a process for severing constitutional ties to Wake

Forest University, which came under fire during the 1998 convention for selling alcohol at a deli on campus and this year did not prohibit Wake Forest Church from holding a marriage-like same-sex union in Wait Chapel on the university's Winston-Salem campus.

Meanwhile, messengers elected a conservative president and moderate first vice president, with the two pledging to work together to foster continuing cooperation among N.C. Baptists of differing persuasions. Mike Cummings of Lumberton,

director of missions for Burnt Swamp Association, was elected president, after first assuming the post in April after the former president, Mac Brunson, left North Carolina to become pastor of First Church, Dallas.

OKLAHOMA
OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — Oklahoma Baptists approved a \$34 million master plan for Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center and affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message, including the family life amendment, during their Nov. 15-16 annual meeting.

and approved a budget that more than doubles the previous year's figure, during their Nov. 16 annual meeting in Dallas.

The SBTC, formed last November by churches at odds with the moderate/liberal direction of the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), has grown from the 130 aligned churches at its inaugural convention to 260 at this year's gathering.

Messengers approved a \$1.97 million budget that more than triples the amount of funds earmarked for missions and evangelism and more than doubles the amount tabbed for

new church starts in the state. The SBTC provides 50% of its undesignated gifts to the SBC.

In addition to the re-election of Stan Coffey, pastor of San Jacinto Church, Amarillo, as SBTC president, Steve Cochran of Macedonia Church, Longview, was elected as first vice president and David Rangel of Primena Church, Grand Prairie, second vice president.

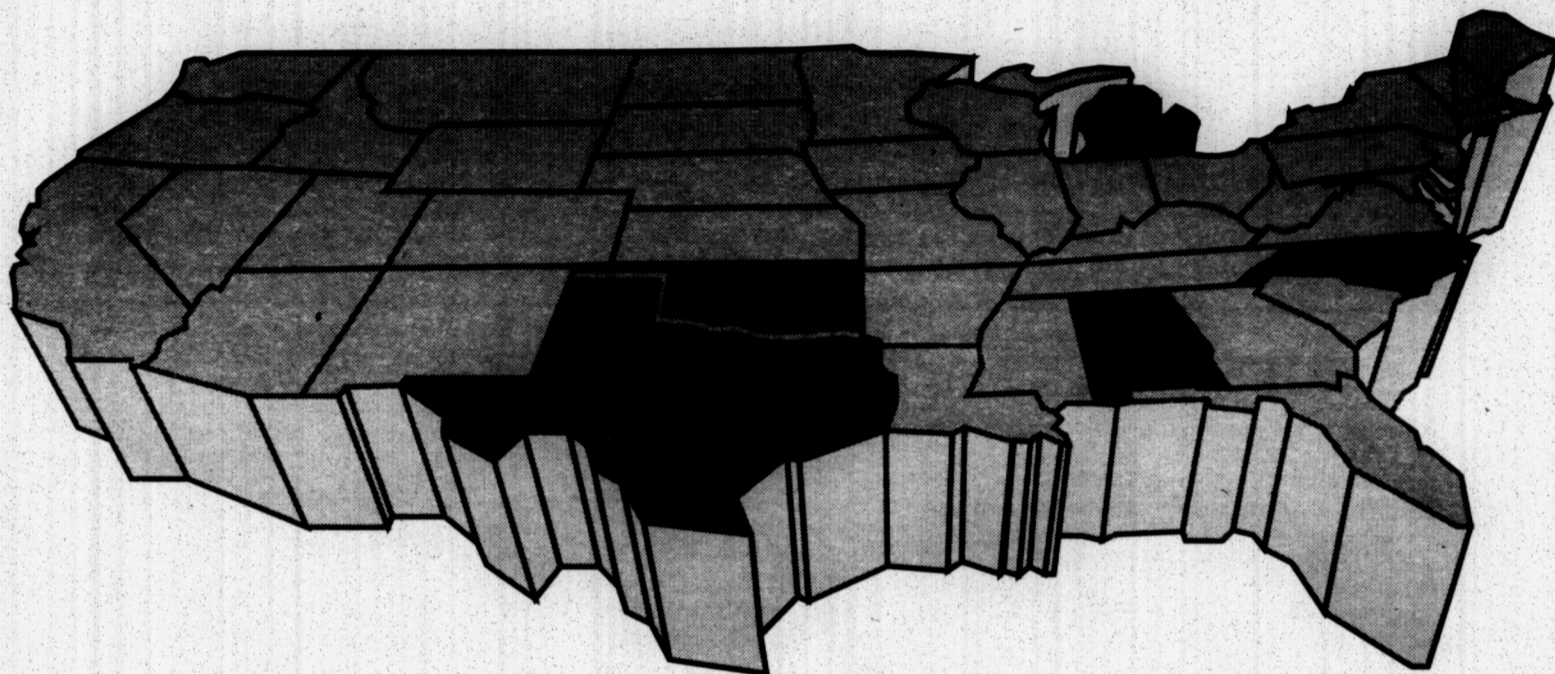
MICHIGAN
MONROE, Mich. (BP) — The theme "Building For The New Millennium" matched the spirit of

the meeting: Michigan Southern Baptists will enter the year 2000 with a renewed sense of commitment to reaching the lost for Christ — including a first-ever full international partnership.

The partnership, with Siberia, was highlighted and approved during the Baptist State Convention of Michigan's Nov. 2-4 annual meeting in Monroe, with many of the 400-plus attendees specifically on hand for the historic launch.

Officers for 2000 were elected by acclamation: President George Fountain, pastor of Raisinville Church, Monroe; First Vice President Bob Beddingfield, pastor of First Church, South Lyon; Second Vice President Tom Fishell, pastor of Roscommon (Mich.) Church, and recording secretary August Peters, pastor of Frontier Church, Hillsdale.

The budget was overwhelmingly approved after considerable discussion. Totalling \$3,248,943 for the year 2000, it is a 3.88% increase over the current budget. It anticipates \$1,549,076 in Cooperative Program giving by Michigan's 259 churches and 47 missions, with 28% designated for Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries. Messengers also agreed that if the budget is met, an additional 1% will be sent to SBC causes. (There are no excepted or preferred items in the budget.)



Gambling: a violation of principles

Fourth in a four-part series

GAMBLING VIOLATES THE PRINCIPLE OF WITNESS

Biblical teachings urge that individuals wisely use both their freedom and their influence. We are enjoined to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22), to "hate what is evil" (Rom. 12:9, NIV), and to work faithfully as our Lord Himself who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Paul's view that freedom must be exercised responsibly is particularly relevant. The actions of the individual Christian are to be disciplined toward the moral and spiritual welfare of others for whom Christ died (Rom. 14:13-21; 1 Cor. 8:1-13). All forms of conduct need to be subjected to a controlling motive: "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

Accordingly, our influence as Christians is to be exerted in a positive and aggressive fashion for the building of community life in which the young and weak and the aging and the needy are protected. Influence and power are not something to be hidden or hoarded. They are to be used for the furthering of Christian values in public affairs. Influence and power refer to the impact of one person upon others. Power and influence may be exercised through moral persuasion, appeals to moral law, and through attempts to establish the common good. Influence at its best is a moral force at work to overcome evil and to work diligently for good.

GAMBLING VIOLATES THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE

Civil government is ordained by God to promote good behavior. The purpose of civil government is to assure the protection of the citizens it serves (Rom. 13:1-4). By promoting gambling

the civil authority becomes the equivalent of a bookie, encouraging a sinful and damaging behavior by the populace in order to get its cut. This perversion of the civil magistrate's God-ordained purpose is realized in any form of gambling. By taxing casino and pari-mutuel gambling, the civil magistrate benefits from the pain of its own citizens who have lost the money that others have won. By promoting lottery gambling the civil magistrate becomes the predator, seeking gain at the expense of those it is entrusted to protect. Many of those people from whom the government wins its money are the weakest and most vulnerable among its populace. Such activity violates the principle of rewarding good and punishing evil that God has specifically entrusted to the civil magistrate (Jer. 22:1-3).

CONCLUSION

Biblical faith, with its stress on loyalty to God and its call to a life of trust, tolerates no bowing of the knee to luck, no dependence on chance, no encouragement to try to get something for nothing. Such idolatrous practices introduce grossly unspiritual and painfully unethical factors into a person's life and outlook. In addition, gambling contributes nothing to the common good. It undermines values, mocks work, finances crime, robs children, enslaves its addicts, subverts governments, and poisons whatever it touches. Biblical insights lead us to reject false promises and say "No" to gambling.

Excerpted from the pamphlet, *Biblical Insights on Gambling*, which may be purchased from *The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, of the Southern Baptist Convention*, at a cost of .22 cents each. Call (615) 244-2495 to order.

Messengers also passed a record \$20.2 million budget and passed resolutions supporting state government, strengthening marriages and calling for prayer.

Messengers passed six resolutions during the convention. One of the resolutions affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message as amended in 1998 and called on Oklahoma Baptists to pray for a BFM study committee named during the 1999 SBC annual meeting.

They overwhelmingly passed the 2000 budget of \$20.2 million — up from the 1999 record budget of \$19.6 million — of which 40% goes to Southern Baptist Convention causes and 60% to Oklahoma causes. That percentage is unchanged from previous years.

Convention officers elected by acclamation were James Robinson, pastor of First Church of Durant, president; Rick Frie, pastor of First Church of Mustang, first vice president; Monty Hale, pastor of Eastern Heights Church of Bartlesville, second vice president; and retired director of missions David Freeman, recording secretary.

TEXAS
DALLAS (BP) — Messengers to the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) passed by overwhelming margins a host of theologically conservative resolutions

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Welcome the light

John 1:1-18

By Carl M. White

Christmas is traditionally marked by the hanging of lights, on trees, telephone poles, tall buildings, water towers, even all around houses. This serves as a reminder that when the Christ child was born in the stable to the virgin Mary, the light of God came to the world.

The divine light (1-5). Some have noted that the beginning of John's gospel sounds a lot like Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Theologically, John's preamble is on the same cosmic scale as Genesis, only it focuses on the coming of Jesus.

Unlike Matthew and Luke, who give us all the details of

Jesus's birth, John gives us a theological statement concerning the coming of Jesus. It is called the incarnation. God becomes a man.

Among Greek philosophy the concept of the eternal Word was of utmost importance. It was the very embodiment of truth. John borrows this idea and applies it to Christian thinking. The Word is Christ, who was in the beginning, was involved in creation, and who is God. This Word is the source of life, which is light for mankind.

Life means light, and light means life. Thus, darkness is the absence of this life. Right at the start of his Gospel, John jux-

taposes light and darkness. Jesus is the light shining into the darkness of the world.

Pointing others to the light (vv. 6-8). In the Christmas story, however, there are other key characters. John the Baptist was also part of the drama, sent by God to bear witness to the light.

It seems incredible that someone was needed to point out the light. This is testimony to the depth of the darkness.

The Apostle John is careful to observe that John the Baptist is not the light. It is just as important that we make the distinction in our own lives. Christ and Christ alone is the source of life. He must be preeminent in all our observances this season.

Receiving the light (vv. 9-13). John now turns his attention to true light. All humanity is blessed by his coming. This is not to say that all will be saved. Tragically,



White

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Time of rejoicing

Matthew 1:1-6, 18-25

By Lynn Jones

I heard about a man who was so unhappy that he was cheered up by the evening news. Now that is unhappy! We live in a world that is filled with bad news. Christmas comes with the greatest news of all — the news of the birth of the Son of God.

Christmas is a time that we associate with joy. It is a time spent with family and friends, singing the music of the season, opening gifts, and attending special programs where we hear the Christmas story.

Heritage (vv. 1-6). Matthew began the Christmas story with the genealogy of Jesus. To a modern reader, that may seem like a

dull beginning, but for Matthew's Jewish audience it was a very significant beginning. The genealogy shows that Jesus was a descendant of David and Abraham. The genealogy also mentions four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba ("Uriah's wife," v. 6). Two of these were Gentiles (Rahab and Ruth), and three were morally stained (Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba). Perhaps Matthew included these to remind us that God's grace reaches out to and transforms all kinds of people.

A boy read the names of this genealogy to his grandfather whose sight was failing. As the boy read, he was surprised to



Jones

see tears in the eyes of his grandfather. When the boy was through reading the genealogy, the old man said, "Just think! The Lord knew every one of them fellers and he knew them by name."

Disappointment (vv. 18-19). Joseph and Mary were "pledged to be married" (NIV). This was an agreement as binding as marriage.

Mary had been in Judea visiting her cousin Elizabeth for three months following the beginning of her pregnancy (Luke 1:56). When Mary returned to Nazareth, it was obvious that she was pregnant. She undoubtedly explained the situation to Joseph, but he evidently did not believe her and decided to divorce her quietly.

Life is filled with many disappointments. Of course Joseph had misinterpreted the situation with Mary. His mistake reminds

us that we are poor judges and stand in need of God's help in making good decisions.

Disclosure (vv. 20-23). After Joseph had considered his problem, he fell asleep. As he slept, an angel appeared to him in a dream. The angel assured Joseph that Jesus indeed had been conceived by the Holy Spirit and that Joseph was not to be afraid to marry Mary. She would give birth to a son, and he was to bear a special name. He was to be named "Jesus." That name summed up his primary mission. He was to save his people from their sins.

Matthew added that this was the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah had prophesied that a virgin would give birth to a son. This son was also to be called "Emmanuel," which means "God with us."

Obedience (1:24-25). Joseph did as the angel had commanded him. He was a man of great courage and faith. He

was willing to swallow his pride and endure social pressure in order to follow God's instructions. He took Mary to his home and lived with her until Jesus was born.

A pastor friend of mine grew up in a large family during the Depression. At Christmas time, all of the ten children in his family would hang their socks by the fireplace on Christmas eve. My friend said that with so many children in the house, his parents could not keep up with how many socks were up and to whom they belonged. My friend said that he would always hang two socks by the fireplace. He added, "On Christmas day I always got twice as much as I deserved."

That is the case with all of us. At Christmas we have received far more than we deserve. For all of us, Christmas should be "A Time of Rejoicing."

Jones is pastor of First Church, Booneville.

LIFE AND WORK

Joseph: exemplary character

Matthew 1-2

By Michael Jones

Charles Swindoll wrote a great book many years ago entitled "The Quest for Character" which I have found challenging, convicting, and inspiring. In the book, Swindoll begins each chapter with quotes by different people. Let me share some with you. "Character is not made in crisis — it is only exhibited" — Freeman. "Only what we have wrought into our character during life can we take with us" — Humboldt. "God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. His goal is not to pamper us physically but

to perfect us spiritually" — Paul Powell. Each of these quotes lead us to the same conclusion, character does matter. Our character does matter to God. It is character "we will present to God when we enter life into his immediate presence."

What is it God desires in our character? What qualities do we need in order to have an "exemplary character"? Joseph, in Matthew 1 & 2, can give us insights into what it is God desires in our character.

Righteousness (1:18-21). Verse 19 clearly states that Joseph was a righteous man. This simply means that he was

"right" before God and in a right relationship with him. Joseph was also righteous in his actions. His kind treatment toward Mary exemplifies the righteousness of his character. He did not want to publicly have Mary disgraced, so he decided to divorce her quietly, which was permitted according to Deut. 24:1.

In order for us to be used by God, we must also be righteous just as Joseph was righteous. That is, we must be in the right relationship with God. In doing so, just as in Joseph's life, our actions will show our relationship with God. Being in a right relationship with God allows us to be used by him for his purposes.

Courage (1:24-25). Joseph did exactly what the angel had commanded of him. He risked it all! It often takes great courage to follow Christ's will

for our lives. Joseph risked his reputation to be married to Mary. He could have been, and probably was, ridiculed for what he had done. Yet, he had courage to follow God's plan.

Do we have courage in our character? Are we willing, just as Joseph was, to risk it all in order to be useful to God? This may involve our reputations, our jobs or even our lives. When we incorporate courage into our character, God uses us to accomplish his will.

Obedience (2:13-15). Joseph immediately obeyed God's command to get up and flee in order to evade Herod's attempt to kill Jesus. It was because of his right relationship to God and his great courage that Joseph responded with prompt obedience.

Prompt obedience is another quality of our character God desires us to possess. If we are to be effective servants of God, we must obey his guidance in our lives. Not pausing to consider

what we are giving up, not waiting to become "righteous" enough, but simply hearing and then following God's word.

Discernment (2:19-23). Once again, Joseph was commanded to get up and go. This time returning to Israel. Once again, he obeyed promptly. Here, Joseph adds another to our list of character qualities God desires, discernment. Joseph knew Archelaus would be no better than Herod. After being warned, he took his family to Nazareth.

We do need to obey God's calling promptly in our life but we must also use discernment. What is discernment? It is, while obeying God, being sensitive to his leading and also to the conditions around us.

Righteousness. Courage. Obedience. Discernment. Do these words describe your character? Let's learn from Joseph about these character qualities.

Jones is associate pastor/youth minister at Monticello Church, Monticello.



Jones

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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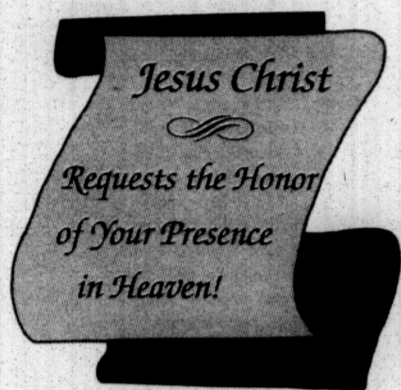
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Storytime...



Children listen with anticipation
to stories about the magic and the miracle of Christmas.

"Tonight in Bethlehem a child is born
who is Christ the Lord."



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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KOTMA TDC RATMA YA
JSEQZREZAC SDQF NFS
QBOFSKB QBA IDFGAC-
KA FX KFC, TDC FX
LAWSW FSO EFOC.

WAMFDC RAQAO FDA:

QGF

Clue: K = G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Four: Thirty-Six.

Patterson predicting denominational split

RALEIGH, N.C. (ABP) — The president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) says he believes a split will occur in the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

In an upcoming article for a Baptist newspaper, SBC president Paige Patterson predicts that churches "desiring greater allowance for diversity" and those disenfranchised "with present conservative leadership" will at some point break away.

Patterson says he is unsure whether the split will follow fault lines already established by churches that have affiliated with the eight-year-old Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) or some other configuration. However, he wrote, "It does appear certain to me that such a division is inevitable."

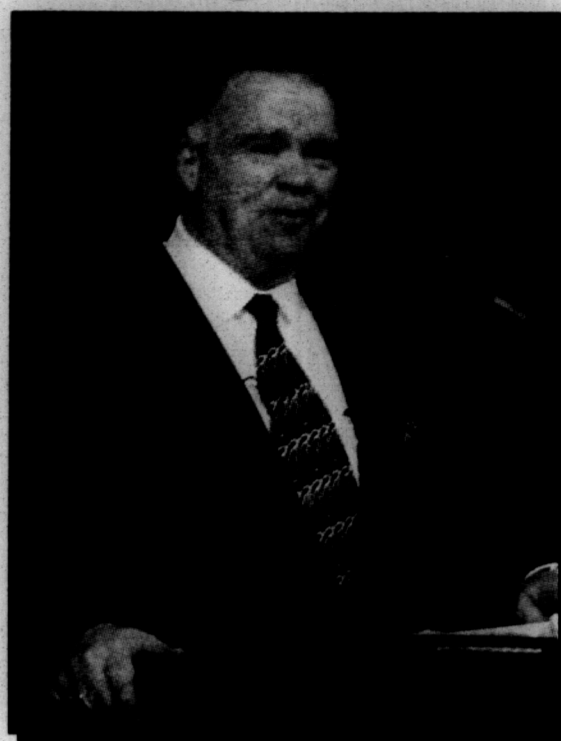
Patterson, president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., said he believes 600-3,500 churches will leave the SBC, which has about 40,000 churches and 15.8 million members.

"Several new entities and relationships will evolve as a result of this action," he wrote in an article for an upcoming special issue of the North Carolina Baptist newspaper, Biblical Recorder. The article is one of several forecasts by prominent Baptists for a Jan. 1 issue focusing on the millennium.

In a telephone interview, Patterson said such a division is likely for the best. "We're much farther apart theologically than some people imagine," he said. "Why sit around and cripple what everybody's doing?"

He noted that division between Paul and Barnabas described in the New Testament resulted in two evangelistic movements instead of one.

Patterson said he does not know when such a split might occur but guessed it



Patterson

could be within three to five years.

Patterson's comments about a possible split in the SBC come as the controversy between conservatives and moderates heats up in several Baptist state conventions. The groups have been at odds since the late 1970s when conservatives gained control of the SBC.

Moderates were eventually shut out of SBC leadership and in 1991 formed the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as a missions-and-ministry alternative to the SBC.

CBF leaders have continually said the organization is not interested in becoming a convention. Most churches that support the CBF still have ties to the SBC.

Conservatives in Texas and Virginia formed separate organizations after failing to gain control of state conventions there.

The moderate Baptist General Convention of Texas is moving toward allowing churches from other states to join its organization and is studying its funding of the SBC and its agencies.

Last year, Baylor University Chancellor Herbert Reynolds proposed creation of a Baptist Convention of the Americas that would span from North America to South America. Reynolds recently said he had secured articles of incorporation for the group with the Texas secretary of state and filed federal papers to preserve the organization's trademark.

Patterson said in his interview that Texas is the only state convention likely to be affected by an SBC split. He said the 3,500 figure he used to estimate the maximum number of churches to leave is based on the unlikely result of the Baptist General Convention of Texas leading its churches to leave the denomination.

"I don't think it will be that large, but I decided to err on the side of the maximum number I could see," he said.

The lower-end estimate of 600, he said, represents the number of churches he believes are strongly committed to the CBF.

Patterson said Baptist churches in North Carolina, despite the presence of a lot of moderate pastors, are overwhelmingly conservative. "That will become increasingly evident as the months go by," he said.

Patterson, Jewish leaders reach meeting impasse

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP) — An impasse has been reached in the offer of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Paige Patterson to meet with six Jewish leaders who charged the SBC with "deception" in evangelistic outreach to Jews, particularly in regard to the SBC's support of the Messianic Jewish movement.

Patterson, in a Dec. 7 letter to Gedale B. Horowitz, president of the New York-based Jewish Community Relations Council, wrote:

"You have now made it crystal clear that our people cannot sit down with the very people who signed the letter of complaint and look them in the eyes and talk with them as friends. With regret, I accept your refusal of our offer, and there the matter ends."

Patterson said he is left to conclude what he had "feared is true. You are not interested in discussing the matter as friends and coming to a credible understanding. You apparently simply wanted to have the opportunity to bash Southern Baptists in the newspaper."

Patterson, who also is president of Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., wrote, "... I, for the life of me, can fathom no other possibility in the light of the willingness of six of you to sign a letter, which you send first to the press, and then refuse to accept our invitation to meet with you for discussion."

Horowitz, in a Dec. 3 letter to Patterson, had reiterated a counterproposal for a "one-on-one" meeting "in a private setting," which Horowitz proposed in a response to a Nov. 10 letter from Patterson replying to concerns raised by Horowitz and five other Jewish leaders, including the top administrators of four Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewish rabbinical schools, in an initial Nov. 8 letter.

A private meeting "would be most conducive" to discussing their concerns, Horowitz wrote, further stating, "I am confident that we can arrive at a mutually agreed upon and amicable resolution of our conflict."

Patterson's original proposal was for a daylong conference at a neutral site that would involve "eight Jewish leaders, the six of you and two others of your choice."

Southern Baptists will also bring eight leaders to the table in an attempt of Jews and Baptists to enhance understanding and encourage absolute integrity of religious expression as we relate each to the other."

Patterson listed "two provisos" in his Nov. 10 letter: "... first, that our Jewish friends would have to understand that Baptists cannot abandon the proclamation of our faith, and second, that two of our eight representatives would be, in the interest of maximum understanding, 'Messianic

Jews.'" In a Nov. 22 letter, Patterson also suggested that a conservative Orthodox rabbi, Daniel Lapin of Seattle, moderate the discussion.

Patterson, in another exchange of letters, responded to Chicago Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founder and president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, who, in an announcement carried by the Associated Press, The New York Times, and other national media, said, "I have no choice but to suspend cooperation with the SBC until it clearly and unequivocally repudiates the targeted proselytizing of Jews."

Among factors Eckstein cited for his decision were an SBC-wide evangelistic/church-planting focus on the city of Chicago for the year 2000, which has been protested by the Council of Religious Leaders of Chicago; a Jewish prayer guide issued in

September by the SBC's International Mission Board focusing on the Jewish High Holy Days — Rosh Hashanah on Sept. 11 and Yom Kippur on Sept. 20; and a Jewish evangelism resolution adopted during the SBC's 1996 annual meeting in Dallas.

Breaking relations with Southern Baptists, Patterson wrote to Eckstein, "does not change our loyalty and love for Jews. It does not change my personal love and appreciation for you, and it does not change the fact that if misunderstood and misrepresented to the whole world, we are going to continue to share the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with every human being on the globe and that includes our Jewish friends."

Concerning Eckstein's contention that Southern Baptists are "targeting" Jews, Patterson wrote that such a notion is "manifestly absurd."



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